



EDWARD THE BLACK PRINCE.

From the Tomb at Canterbury

T.H. Turner 1799



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12 June
J. H. T.

A

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF

Ancient Chivalry,

AND

Description of Armour.

' Heard you the din of Battle Bray,
" Lance to Lance and Horse to Horse" —

GRAY.

Sans peur et sans reproche.

CHEV. BAYARD.

COMPILED BY T. H. T.

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Turner (T.H.)
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THE

Origin of Chivalry,

*BETWEEN the age of Charlemagne and that of the Crusades, a revolution had taken place among the Spaniards, the Normans, and the French, which gradually extended to the rest of Europe. The service of the Infantry was degraded to the Plebeians; the Cavalry formed the strength of the Armies, and the honourable name of *Miles*, or Soldier, was confined to the Gentlemen who served on Horseback, and were invested with the character of Knighthood. The Dukes and Counts, who had usurped the rights of Sovereignty, divided the Provinces among their faithful Barons: the Barons distributed among their Vassals the Fiefs or Benefices of their jurisdiction; and these military Tenants, the Peers of each other and of their Lord, composed the noble or equestrian Order, which disdained to conceive the Peasant or Burgher as

* *Gibbon.*

of

of the same species with themselves. The dignity of their birth was preserved by pure and equal alliances; their Sons alone, who could produce four quarters or lines of Ancestry, without spot or reproach, might legally pretend to the honour of Knighthood; but a valiant Plebeian was sometimes enriched and ennobled by the Sword, and became the Father of a new race. A single Knight could impart, according to his judgement, the character which he received; and the warlike Sovereigns of Europe derived more glory from this personal distinction, than from the lustre of their Diadem. This ceremony, of which some traces may be found in Tacitus and the Woods of Germany, was in its origin simple and profane; the Candidate, after some previous trial, was invested with his Sword and Spurs; and his Cheek or Shoulder were touched with a slight blow, as an emblem of the last affront, which it was lawful for him to endure. But Superstition mingled in every public and private action of life; in the Holy Wars, it sanctified the profession of Arms; and the order of Chivalry was assimilated in its rights and privileges to the sacred orders of Priesthood. The bath and white Garment of the Novice, were a copy of the regeneration of Baptism; his Sword, which he offered

offered on the Altar, was blessed by the Ministers of Religion; his solemn reception was preceeded by Fasts and Vigils; and he was created a Knight in the name of God, of St. George, and of St. Michael the Archangel. He swore to accomplish the duties of his Profession; and education, example, and the public opinion, were the inviolable guardians of his Oath. As the Champion of God and the Ladies, he devoted himself to speak the Truth; to maintain the Right; to protect the Distressed; to practice *Courtesy*, a virtue less familiar to the Ancients; to pursue the Infidels; to despise the allurements of ease and safety; and to vindicate in every perilous Adventure the honor of his Character. The abuse of the same Spirit provoked the illiterate Knight to disdain the Arts of Industry and Peace, to esteem himself the sole judge and avenger of his own Injuries; and proudly to neglect the Laws of Civil Society and Military Discipline. Yet the benefits of this Institution, to refine the temper of Barbarians, and to infuse some principles of Faith, Justice, and Humanity, were strongly felt, and have been often observed. The asperity of national prejudice was softened; and the community of Religion and Arms spread a similar colour and generous Emulation over
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the face of Christendom. Abroad, in enterprise and Pilgrimage, at home in martial exercise, the Warriors of every Country were perpetually associated ; and impartial taste must prefer a Gothic Tournament to the Olympic Games of Classic Antiquity. Instead of the naked spectacles which corrupted the manners of the Greeks, and banished from the stadium the Virgins and Matrons ; the pompous decoration of the Lifts was crowned with the presence of chaste and high-born Beauty, from whose hands the Conqueror received the Prize of his Dexterity and Courage. The skill and strength that were exerted in Wrestling and Boxing, bear a distant and doubtful relation to the merit of a Soldier ; but the Tournaments, as they were invented in France, and eagerly adopted both in the East and West, presented a lively image of the business of the Field. The single Combats, the general Skirmish, the defence of a Pass, or Castle, were rehearsed as in actual Service ; and the Contest, both in real and mimic War, was decided by the superior management of the Horse and Lance. The Lance was the proper and peculiar Weapon of the Knight : his Horse was of a large and heavy breed ; but this Charger, till he was roused by the approaching danger, was usually led by an Attendant

Attendant, and he quietly rode a Pad or Palfrey of a more easy pace. His Helmet and Sword, his Greaves, and Buckler, it would be superfluous describe; but I may remark, that at the period of the Crusades, the Armour was less ponderous than in later times; and that instead of a massy cuirass, his breast was defended by an Hauberk or Coat of Mail. When their long Lances were fixed in the rest, the Warriors furiously spurred their Horses against the Foe; and the light Cavalry of the Turks and Arabs could seldom stand against the direct and impetuous weight of their charge. Each Knight was attended to the Field by his faithful Squire, a Youth of equal birth and similar hopes; he was followed by his Archers and Men at Arms, and four, or five, or six Soldiers, were computed as the furniture of a complete *Lance*. In the expeditions to the neighbouring Kingdoms or the Holy Land, the duties of the feudal tenure no longer subsisted; the voluntary service of the Knights and their followers was either prompted by zeal or attachment, or purchased with rewards and promises; and the numbers of each Squadron were measured by the power, the wealth, and the fame of each independent Chieftain. They were distinguished by his Banner, his Armorial Coat, and his cry of War; and the most

most ancient Families of Europe must seek in these Atchievements the origin and proof of their Nobility. In this rapid portrait of Chivalry, I have been urged to anticipate on the story of the Crusades, at once an effect, and a cause, of this memorable Institution.

OF THE

ARMOUR.

IN the early ages of Chivalry, Plate Armour was not worn, the flat Helmet and the Hawberk or twisted Mail, was the invariable defence for a long period; many Tombs, in particular those of the Templars, have the Effigies thus habited; but in the reign of Edward III, we find the Hawberk appearing only about the Neck, at the back part of the Legs and Thighs, and round the Waist, hanging from under the Breast-plate, as in the Frontispiece, to the time of Henry VII, it disappeared gradually except at the Joints.

At the time of Elizabeth, Gunpowder had become in more general use, and the increased thickness of the Armour, with the additional Placcate in front, to resist its force, made the Armour extremely unweildy; to ease in some degree the wearer, the Greeves began to be laid aside.

During

During the Civil Wars of Charles I, Armour excepting the Greeves, was constantly wore, some little alteration took place in the Helmet in the succeeding reigns, and the Brassards and Cuisses, being thrown aside, the Cuirass and Coat of buff was retained ; but the seven Years War, where the Cuirass was worn, was the last in which the English Army had any remains of their ancient Armour. Formerly, the employment of Armourers was one of the principal ; the intricacy of their work, and the technical terms of the different pieces, was an occupation that required length of time to arrive at any proficiency ; the only Person of that occupation in England, is Mr. COOPER, of the Tower.

The Names of the principal parts of the Arms are these, the

Helmet, for the Head,

Beaver, the part that opened in front

Visor, opposite the Eyes

Gorget, round the Neck, the origin of that
which Officers now wear when on Duty

Breast-plate, in the front

Back-piece, at the back

Rest, near the right Arm-pit, for supporting
the Lance

Placcate, over the Breast-plate, to strengthen
it

Tabard,

Tabard, the Family Arms of the wearer, given
on Silk, as in the Frontispiece

Pouldron, for the Shoulder

Brassards, for the Arms

Gauntlets, for the Hands

Rein Guards, for the lower part of the Back

Cuisses, for the Thighs

Greeves, for the Legs

Besides the *Lance*, *Shield*, and *Sword*, with
the *Testers*, *Main feres*, and *Trappings* for the
Horse.

OF

Jousts and Tournaments.

* **A**S the frequent exhibition of the very sumptuous Materials and Workmanship, of which Armorial Trophies consisted, could not but be grateful to minds wholly dedicated to the pursuit of Chivalry ; we cannot wonder that the splendor presented by Jousts and Tournaments, was fought as often as any occasion offered, either of judicial Combat or of Public shew. During several Centuries both were equally accordant with the genius of the People, and conducted with the same Ceremonies. I shall therefore give a detail of the established ordinances and modes to be observed at them.

Judicial Combat was granted upon petition to the King, in causes where the Crime was so atrocious as to threaten the Life of either Party, and was maintained and denied without proof by Witnesses. Recourse was then had by Royal Licence, to the decision of the Sword or Spear.

At

* Dallaway.

At these Solemnities the High Constable and Earl Marshal were always officially present, and the King in person, if the Parties were Noble. No process of Law could be more summary, for the vanquished Combatant was adjudged guilty, and executed without appeal or delay; and if the causes were treasonable, with the usual marks of indignity; many instances however of this practice are not upon record.

Previously to the final issue of the Quarrel, application was made to the Earl Marshal's Court, when the Appellant, after reciting his Grievance, had option either of civil or military Redress; having pledged himself to the latter, his Cartell of Challenge was preferred to the Earl Marshall, with a Petition that he would obtain the Licence of the Sovereign for a solemn Joust. But this procedure could only occur between Gentlemen of Blood or Coat Armour, as without these qualifications, no man was entitled to the cognizance or protection of the Court of Chivalry. Much of the apparently unjust partiality to the accident of high Birth is lost, if it be considered, that those who disgraced it by dishonorable actions were liable to the severe and irrevocable sentence of Degradation, which was not unfrequently inflicted with Ceremonies of the most humiliating sort.

The

The ferocious animosity with which these Conflicts were carried on, was characteristic of the fierce spirit of Chivalry, which admitted none of the palliative Virtues ; its resentments were sanguinary, and its generosity lost much of its utility by extravagance and injudicious direction upon the insuperable prejudices, under which the mind of Man then laboured, all their opinions and conduct were formed, and, there were many interferences, which sensibly wounded the Pride of our Ancestors, which Modern refinements have taught us to overlook or deride. Such were the assumption of the Armorial Ensigns of others, the rivalry in the affections of the Fair Sex, the usurpation of feignorial Rights, and many of an inferior nature, which are now more readily accommodated. In cases of Honor the Duel offered an immediate and decisive Redress, in those of Property ; the laziness of the Law caused the Martial Remedy to be frequently preferred.

It was peculiarly congenial with the Warlike Spirit of early times to encourage the representations of these Combats, in which the Splendor and Solemnity were equal, and personal danger in a great measure avoided. They were called Tournaments, Tilts, or Hastiludes, and were always held by the King's appointment

ment, and at his expence, excepting the gorgeous Furniture of the Knights. Ten or more Champions on either side not rarely entered the Lists, and the Ladies attended to award the Prize; but where the Adventurers were so numerous, intricate circumstances would often arise, which rendered the decision of Victory difficult to be made, and produced much debate in the Earl Marshal's Court.

It is certain that these Exhibitions wanted the sanction of the Church, for Monks could not behold that without scandal, which diverted the channel of Wealth from their own Coffers, and were jealous of Shews in which they could take no part, and which they found with indignation were equally amusing to every rank in Society, as Processions of Saints or Holy Rites. Several of the Pontiffs were prevailed upon to denounce their wrath upon the partakers in these Sports; but the strong propensity to Military pursuits, which were then so prevalent, subduing Superstition itself, baffled and defied the Menace. Of such extreme cost were these Entertainments, that the Royal Treasure could alone support them, when carried to the greatest height of Decoration and Magnificence.

By no Sovereign were they celebrated either so frequently, or with such profusion, as by
King

King Edward III, during whose stately Reign, Chivalry exhibed all her stores of romantic Elegance, his Triumphs were supplied with the most costly Armorial Furniture; and the accounts now remaining of the expences of his Wardrobe, exceed the present idea of the resources of that time; to which his grateful Subjects willingly contributed, and in which the Nobility were proud to consume the produce of their rentals; even the Ladies of the Court partook of that Martial Spirit, and on many occasions assisted at these Solemnities, fantastically Armed, and mounted on Horses most richly Caparisoned; they constantly attended, seated under Canopies of State; and it is recorded that Queen Philippa, Queen of King Edward III, very narrowly escaped with her Life, upon the falling down of the Scaffold at a Tournament held in Cheapside.

That the veneration for those engaged in these Combats might be excited in the Spectators by personal Dignity, and excellence, no one was admitted to the Lifts, who could not prove himself, at least materially, to be one of four Descents, and display a legitimate Coat Armour; this quality was in some degree introductory of the first compilation of Pedigrees; for it is certain, that those who wished to enter
the

the Lifts were ambitious of exhibiting every descent they could prove beyond those which were merely necessary. Although the custom of bearing Arms was infinitely diversified, and improved by the splendor exhibited at the Jousts, Tourneys, Hastiludes, or Tilts; it is certain from this circumstance, that they were not antecedent to the introduction of personal Armories, since the lawful and allowed bearing of Heraldic Devices was an indispensable preliminary. No description I could offer of these superb scenes can exceed that of Chancer, who was himself an eye witness to them—than this Sketch nothing can be more lively and picturesque;

There mayst thou sen devy sing of harneys,
 So uncouth, so ryche, and wrought so well,
 Of gold smythrye, of brodyng, and of stel;
 The scheldis bright, the testers and traparys;
 Gold hewen helmys, hawberkys, cote armourys;
 Lordes, in paramendis, on her courtierys;
 Knyghtis of retenue, and eke squyeris;
 Rayinge of sperys, and helmys brokelynge;
 Gigginge of scheldys, with lanweris lacyng;
 There as nede is, they werein notwys idle;
 The fomy stedys, on the golden bridle
 Gnawing, and fasti the armouris also,
 With file and hammer prickinge to and fro;
 Knavys on fote, and commonys manv on,
 With schorte stavys, as thikke as they may gon:
 Pypis, and Trumpis, nakerys and clariounys,
 That in battayle blowen boody sounys.

It is allowed by Historians, that the English were more addicted to these Martial exercises than

than any other Nation; and by no means did their Sovereigns retain or conciliate the affections of their Subjects so much as by frequent Tournaments, which even till the later Centuries were occasionally celebrated in Smithfield during Lent. Many elaborate Treatises have been published in several Languages, in which the forms of Chivalry are scrupulously discussed, the degrees of honor ascertained, and punishments prescribed for those who offended against the laws and rights of Arms. To the Germans and French we must allow ourselves indebted for the invention and arrangement of these magnificent Exhibitions; and if the industrious Colombiere be consulted, it will be found that we were content to adopt their Ceremonies without deviation, and resorted to their Institutes for final decisions.

One of the most solemn occasions of Combat, excepting for the proof of High Treason, was the assumption of a Family bearing which admitted a double claim; such indeed occurred but rarely, and those of few under the rank of a Baron. The privilege of bearing Arms involved in it every honorable pretension, the laws of Chivalry had ever the redress of Injuries, and the establishment of just Rights as their invariable object.

In

In the Tournament so severe was the shock, that a Turkish Ambassador at Paris, being present at one of these solemnities, was asked what he thought of it, replied, if it was in earnest it was too little, but if it was for pastime it was too much, as Man is no hypocrite in his amusements it enables us to judge of the character of our Ancestors, and however pleasing Modern manners may be, what perhaps we have gained in refinement, we have lost in energy.

Origin of the Point of Honor.

*THE trial by Combat had some reason for it founded on experience. In a Military Nation, Cowardice supposes other vices ; it is an argument of a Person's having resisted the principles of his Education, of his being insensible of honour, and of having refused to be directed by those maxims which govern other men ; it shows that he neither fears their contempt, nor sets any value upon their esteem. Men of any tolerable extraction seldom want either the dexterity requisite to accompany strength, or the strength necessary to concur with courage ; because as they

set

* Montesquieu,

set a value upon Honor, they are practised of course in things without which this Honor cannot be obtained. Besides, in a Military Nation, where strength, courage, and prowess are esteemed, crimes really odious are those which arise from imposture, finesse, and cunning, that is, from cowardice.

Here I see the first rise and formation of the particular articles of our point of Honor. The Accuser began with declaring in the presence of the Judge, that such a person had committed such an action; and the Accused made answer that he lied; upon which the Judge gave orders for the Duel. It became then an established rule, that whenever a Person had the Lie given him, it was incumbent on him to fight.

Upon a Man's declaring he would fight, he could not afterwards depart from his word; if he did, he was condemned to a penalty. Hence this rule ensued, that whenever a person had engaged his word, honor forbade him to recal it.

Gentlemen fought one another on Horseback, armed at all points; Villains fought on Foot and with Batoons. Hence it followed, that the Batoon was looked upon as the instrument of insults and affronts; because to strike a Man with it, was treating him like a Villain.

None but Villains fought with their Faces uncovered; so that none but they could receive a
blow

blow on the Face. Therefore a box on the Ear became an injury that must be expiated with Blood, because the Person who received it had been treated as a Villain.

Let us then conclude, that our forefathers were extremely sensible of affronts; but that affronts of a particular kind, such as being struck with a certain instrument on a certain part of the body, and in a certain manner, were yet unknown to them. All this was included in the affront of being beaten; and, in this case, the proportion of the excess constituted the greatness of the outrage.

As in the single Combats, the Champions were armed at all points; and as with heavy Arms, both of the offensive and defensive kind, those of particular temper and force were of infinite advantage; the notion of some Champions having enchanted Arms, must certainly have turned the brains of a great many People.

Hence arose the marvellous system of Chivalry. The minds of all sorts of People quickly imbibed these extravagant ideas. Then it was that in Romances they beheld Knights-errant, Necromancers, Fairies, winged or intelligent Horses, invisible or invulnerable Men, Magicians who concerned themselves in the birth and education of great Personages, enchanted and disenchanted

chanted Palaces, a new World in the midst of
 the old one, and the ordinary course of Nature
 left only to the lower class of Mankind.

Knights-errant always in Armour, in a part of
 the World full of Castles, Forts, and Robbers,
 found honor in punishing Injustice and protecting
 Weakness. Hence our Romances abounded
 with Gallantry founded on the idea of Love,
 joined with that of Strength and Protection.

Such was the original of Gallantry, when they
 formed to their Imaginations an extraordinary
 set of Men, who at the sight of Virtue, joined
 with Beauty in Distress, were inclined to expose
 themselves to all hazards for their sake, and to
 endeavour to please them in the common actions
 of Life.

Our Romances of Chivalry flattered this de-
 sire of pleasing, and communicated to a part of
 Europe that spirit of Gallantry, which we may
 venture to affirm was very little known to the
 Ancients.

The prodigious luxury of that immense City
 of Rome, flattered the idea of sensible pleasures.
 A certain notion of tranquillity in the Fields of
 Greece gave rise to the description of soft and
 amorous sentiments. The idea of Knights-er-
 rant, protectors of the Virtue and Beauty of the
 fair Sex, led People to that of Gallantry.

This

This spirit was continued by the custom of Tournaments, which, uniting the rights of Valour and Love, added still a great importance to Gallantry.

State of Chivalry in the Reign of Edward III.

* **I**F England during these shining Revolutions, gained any real advantage, it was only that of having a spirit of Elegance and Honor now diffused through every rank of People. The meanest Soldier now began to follow his Leader from love, and not compulsion; he was brave from sentiment alone, and had the Honor of his Country beating his Heart, even though in the humblest station. This was the time when Chivalry was at the highest, and all the successes of England, at this period, were owing to a concurrence of circumstances not much regarded by Historians: *A romantic Nation, was led on by a romantic King.*

This Spirit of Chivalry, in some measure, served to soften the ferocity of the age; it was a mixture of Love, Generosity, and War. You have

* History of England, by a Nobleman.

have already seen, that the sons of Princes and the Nobility, instead of being bred to Arts, or polished by the sciences, were brought into the Field at an early age, and instructed in no other arts, but those of Arms.

This instruction consisted in little more than merely how to sit on Horse back, to wield the Lance, to run at the Ring, to flourish at a Tournament, to fall at the feet of a Mistress, and attain such accomplishments as inured their Bodies to bear the fatigues of a Campaign. The rules of Tactics, of Incampments, of Stratagems, or Fortifications, were but little minded by any.

On the Decline of Chivalry.

I CANNOT conclude these few Pages without inserting Mr. Burke's animated lamentation on the decline on Chivalry, beginning with the exclamation——But the age of Chivalry is gone. —That of Sophisters, Œconomists, and Calculators, has succeeded ; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall

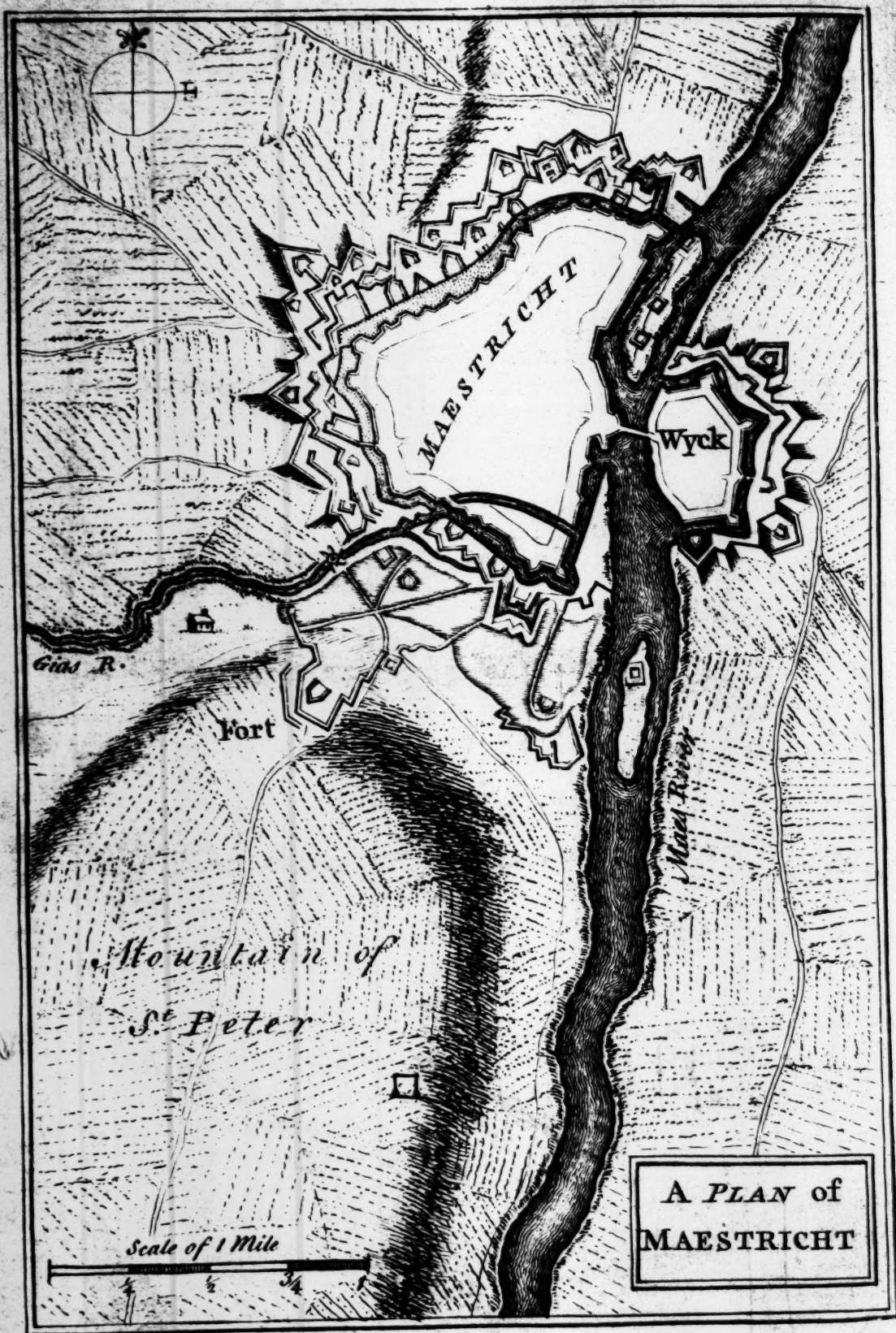
shall we behold that generous Loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the Heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted Freedom. The unbought grace of Life, the cheap defence of Nations, the nurse of Manly Sentiment and Heroic Enterprise is gone ! It is gone, that sensibility of Principle, that chastity of Honour, which felt a stain like a Wound, which inspired Courage whilst it mitigated Ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which Vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.

This mixed system of opinion and sentiment had its origin in the Ancient Chivalry ; and the principle, though varied in its appearance by the varying state of human affairs, subsisted and influenced through a long succession of generations, even to the time we live in. If it should ever be totally extinguished, the loss I fear will be great. It is this which has given its character to modern Europe. It is this which has distinguished it under all its forms of Government, and distinguished it to its advantage, from the States of Asia, and possibly from those States which flourished in the most brilliant periods of the antique world. It was this, which, without confounding Ranks, had produced a noble Equality, and handed it down through all the gradations

gradations of social Life. It was this opinion which mitigated Kings into Companions, and raised private Men to be fellows with Kings. Without force, or opposition, it subdued the fierceness of pride and power; it obliged Sovereigns to submit to the soft collar of social esteem, compelled stern authority to submit to elegance, and gave a domination vanquisher of Laws, to be subdued by Manners.

But now all is to be changed. All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of Life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into Politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private Society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of Life is to be rudely torn off. All the super-added ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering Nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation, are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated Fashion.

FINIS.





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